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ABSTRACT

Relationship problems can destroy an otherwise successful bilingual education program. Administrative problems of this type are difficult to identify and to work with. If the source is identified, the problem may be effectively dealt with. This paper presents a list of administrative problem sources that may cause human relation difficulties in bilingual education programs. The list may be used by administrators as an inventory in their program's process evaluation, or as a checklist to identify possible problem areas for further attention. (Author/CFM)

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Resolving Human Relations Problems

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Some of the most critical problems in the administration of Bilingual Education programs occur in the area of human relations. Human relations problems can result in (1) excessive pressure, conflict and frustration in the work situation, (2) aggression and hostility towards children and co-workers; (3) subversion of the program and its goals; (4) employee dissatisfaction, absenteeism, poor health and high turnover, and (5) other bureau-pathological behavior. In short, relationship problems can destroy an otherwise successful Bilingual Education program.

Administrative problems of this type are difficult to identify and to work with, however, it is important that they be squarely confronted and effectively dealth with. Otherwise Bilingual Education programs will be no more helpful to language minority children than traditional education programs have been in the past.

An initial step in dealing with these administrative problems is to identify their source. It is not possible to deal with or solve unidentified or unrecognized problems. Once a problem is identified it may then be prevented, eliminated or remediated.

This paper presents a list of administrative problem-sources that may cause human relation difficulties in Bilingual Education programs. The list was developed from informal observation of several existing programs. The list may be used by administrators as an inventory in their program's process evaluation, or as a checklist to identify possible problem areas for further attention.

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The list has been successfully used by Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) and the Center for the Management of Innovation in Multicultural Education (MIME) as a problem-solving activity in workshops with principals and other administrators. Small groups were first asked to decide whether they perceived each of the items on the list as a problem-source in their district. They next identified the three problem-sources which they considered the most critical. The small groups then discussed ways of preventing or remediating the problem areas identified. Finally, the groups shared their problem-solving strategies and their discussions. School districts may use the list in similar ways as an initial step in dealing with human relations problems.

Human Relations Problem-Source List

(1) Bilingual Education is an innovation that requires organizational change and growth. Bilingual Education programs disrupt the status quo and change the existing patterns of activity and communication in a school district.

(2) Innovations such as Bilingual Education are untested on a large scale. There is a lack of consensus on basic curriculum and instructional issues. There is also a lack of definite guidelines or consistent solutions to some problems encountered by teachers and supervisors.

(3) Bilingual Education programs may lack community support, supporting board policy or strong administrative sanction. As a result, the program may be given low priority and minimum local commitment and support.

(4) Bilingual Education program administrators may lack clear responsibilities, functions and roles, and receive inadequate administrative support.

(5) Bilingual Education program administration may have limited access to the authority and [toward] structure of a school district.

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(6) Instructional line personnel such as principals and curriculum supervisors are not given responsibility or incentives for the success of the program.

(7) Administrative and instructional staffs are not evaluated in terms of performance criteria related to the program.

(8) Bilingual/Bicultural programs are partially the products of social and political change; as a result, they are subject to political controversy, criticism and opposition from within the district and the community.

(9) Bilingual programs are funded by a combination of federal, state and local programs. This may cause a number of problems:

(a) Different funding sources may require different types of bilingual programs within one district.

(b) Federal and state funding is uncertain. This makes planning coordination and hiring efforts difficult.

(c) Government agencies are not consistent in the application of criteria for approving proposals. As a result program planning is based on what is fundable not on the needs or characteristics of the district.

(d) Differences in funding sources result in differences in materials and resources available to the instructional staff.

(10) Non participating staff may feel threatened by Bilingual Education because they do not understand the program or because they think that they may lose their jobs.

(11) Bilingual Education programs complicate the difficult job of a principal. Special programs tend to disrupt the normal schedules and activities of a school. As a result principals may be unsupportive and uncooperative.

Conclusion

Solutions to problems in human relations are never simple. It is difficult to deal with feelings and emotions, and to heal perceived personal injury. However, if Bilingual Education programs are to succeed, healthy human relationships must be nourished and existing problems must be dealt with. Administrators may find the problem-source list presented here useful in the initial problem-identification step required in dealing with the critical human relations problem area.